

## "Honoring Sacrifice & Commitment of our Nation's Veterans."

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As I write these words I think to myself, "What is Veterans Day really about?" IS it About having a day off from work or school? Gathering with family and friends to have a cookout? What's the true purpose of Veterans Day? IN my eyes AS well AS so many others, Veterans Day should be everyday. I've never personally served for our country, but so many of my family members AS well AS close friends have. So ON those days like Veterans and Memorial Day my fullest Respects and Love go out to them and everyone that has served for our country and still out there serving either in the states or in another country. Growing up I never fully understood what they meant by "The Ultimate sacrifice for their country" until I personally had the experience to visit Arlington National Cemetery as well as the Vietnam Memorial. I remember visiting the Cemetery with my parents and seeing all these crosses (each one representing a person that had passed away while serving their country or who Honorably served in any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces) I've never seen so many crosses in my life as there



was at Arlington. While on the Tour of the cemetery we came across The Tomb OF THE UNKNOWN Soldiers. It was guarded by a Soldier carrying a rifle taking twenty-one steps back and forth in front of the Tomb. (It alludes to the twenty-one gun salute, which is the highest honor given any military or foreign dignitary.) While at the Tomb we witnessed the changing of the Guards and heard the meaning of the protection of this sacred Tomb. At first I wondered to myself, "Whats so Honorable to guard this tomb?" Then hearing the man speak about the oath these Soldiers took to guard the UNKNOWN Soldiers (Committing two years of their lives by living in barracks under the Tomb, not drinking any alcohol on or off duty for the rest of their lives as well as disgrace their uniform in public by swearing, fighting, or anything of that nature.) For the first six months of duty guarding the tomb they cannot talk to anyone, Nor watch TV. ALL off duty time is spent studying the 175 notables laid to rest in Arlington National Cemetery. They must memorize who they are and where they are interred. The Tomb has been patrolled continuously 24/7 since 1930, with changing of the guards every thirty-minutes through



rain, snow, and even Hurricanes. During the 2003 Hurricane Isabelle military members assigned the duty of guarding the Tomb were given permission to suspend the assignment. They respectfully declined the offer, "No Way, Sir!" Soaked to the skin, marching in the pelting rain of a tropical storm, they said that guarding the Tomb was not just an assignment, it was the highest honor that can be afforded to a service person. After hearing that and seeing with my two eyes the dedication these soldiers had given to their country, it made me realize what it meant to believe in something no matter what the outcome. Later that day we visited the Vietnam Memorial, "The Wall". Words can not even express what I'd seen there, so many people different walks of life all there paying respects to every name on that wall especially names they knew or were related to. I'll never forget this lady, she was sitting by her son's name (hand pressed against the wall with her face against his name) crying saying out loud, "I'll never forget you son, I love you and miss you!" There was nothing I could say nor anyone <sup>use</sup> to her to stop her from crying but it was her right to be there as well as everyone

crying by the names of there loved ones. As  
I walked away I fully understood what I  
had seen that day. From that day forward  
my Respects will always go out to everyone  
that has Served or still serving for our  
Country..